

"THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST."

BY GEORGE J. DENT,

An Elder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"But though we, or an Angel from Heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached UNTO YOU, LET HIM BE ACCURSED." GALATIANS, 1. 8.

It is very evident that the author of the above passage of scripture,—the Apostle Paul—thoroughly understood that there was only one system of religion which could be termed Gospel, one certain code of laws by obedience to which, mankind could receive an inheritance in the Kingdom of God, all other systems being only perversions of the Gospel of Christ. It was because some had turned away from that Gospel, and had given heed to the teaching of uninspired men; men who were teaching false doctrine, that the Apostle Paul was led to make the foregoing remark, thereby warning all against either teaching or receiving any other doctrine. It may appear to some that Paul was very exclusive, and no doubt this was the view taken by the people generally in his day; but at the same time, if he—Paul—was exclusive in this respect, so also was our Savior, for he remarked;—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." John 10. 1.

It is not reasonable for us to suppose that God would establish more than one Gospel,—neither has He done so—as a means of salvation for His children. There would be no system of order in anything of this kind; and we are taught that God's Kingdom is a Kingdom of order, and that "order is Heaven's first law." It will not do for us to follow the teachings of men, unless we are assured that those teachings are in accordance with the scriptures; as the Prophet Isaiah has said,—“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” Isaiah 8. 20.

The Scriptures are given for our instruction and learning, and it is by them we must test the teachings of men who come to us professing to teach the Gospel of Christ. We must do as Paul says,—“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good”. 1 Thess. 5. 21.

In speaking of the doctrine of Christ as it was taught in the Church in the days of Christ and His apostles; the Apostle John says—“If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed”. 2 John 10.

We understand by this, that John as well as Paul recognized only one doctrine; only one system of religion as the genuine gospel, and he cautioned the saints against receiving any other, or encouraging those who taught any other. It was the same with the other Apostles; there was uniformity in their teachings, irrespective of the class of people they were amongst, for all had to receive the same doctrine before they could be constituted members of the Church of Christ. Paul says—“And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them (the Jews) that Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles”. Galatians 2. 2.

With the understanding that there is only one Gospel, it becomes the duty of all to search for it, till they find it. This is a duty we owe to ourselves as well as to God, and in order to obtain the knowledge of the

Gospel, we should be willing to make any sacrifice that is necessary; remembering that it is ourselves who will receive the benefits. Christ said,—“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.” John 5. 39.

We will therefore put into practice the injunction given by our Savior, and search the scriptures, and endeavor with the assistance of the Spirit of God to find the Gospel.

The first account we have of the gospel being preached in the days of Christ, is that of John, coming and preparing the way for Christ, and teaching the people to repent of their sins and be baptized in order that their sins might be forgiven. But before this could be done, before John baptized them, he required of them to show by their works that they had repented, and this they could not have done in a proper manner unless they had faith in his teachings. “So then faith cometh by hearing; and hearing by the word of God.” Romans 10. 17. It is through the teachings of the servants of God, that this principle of faith is awakened within us, and we are led to understand that there is a way of escape for us from the effects of sin, but we must believe we have sinned before we can repent.

This principle of faith is the foundation upon which we have to build, and is therefore the beginning of the Gospel. It is the first principle in revealed religion, and consequently must be developed within us before we can progress in other principles of the gospel that are incorporated for our salvation. Faith must of necessity go before repentance.

Through the proper exercise of faith we understand the necessity of repentance, and we are led to humble ourselves before the Lord, and to repent of our sins, which consists not in being sorry for them alone but in turning away and forsaking them, by making a determination to do better in the future. This is a genuine repentance and one that needs not to be repented of, anything short of this is as the sorrow of the world which worketh death.

There are some who wish to get forgiveness of their past sins without reforming their lives; this is not acceptable to the Lord, and the remission of sins through baptism is not promised to such. It was, no doubt, on account of such people coming to John to be baptized that he was led to tell them that they must bring forth fruits meet for repentance, so that they should not have to do the first works over again, but that after they had laid the foundation of repentance from dead works, to go on to perfection. By reference to Acts 2, 37—41 verses, we find that this was the order of the Gospel as taught by Peter and his fellow apostles on the day of Pentecost; for, after the people through their teaching were convinced of their wickedness, they were led to exclaim; “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” They were told to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins. This order of things would follow as a natural consequence, for they, after having repented, might reasonably expect to be forgiven. The doctrine of baptism was therefore established in order that those who repented in a proper manner could be forgiven.

The promise of Peter to the people on that occasion was, that they should receive a remission of their sins through obedience to his teachings, and he furthermore told them that the same promise would be extended to all, even as many as the Lord our God should call; consequently we are included. When Christ sent His disciples out to preach the Gospel, he said to them,—“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned,” Mark 16, 16, and again, when He

was about to take His departure from them after His resurrection, He said to them,—“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” Matthew 28. 18—20 verses.

The jailor asked Paul and Silas the same question as the people asked Peter. He was told to believe; this was the first step he had to take, and when the Apostles had spoken unto him and his household, the word of the Lord, they *did* believe, and the consequence was, they went out the same hour of the night and were baptized; which is positive proof to us, that that was the word of the Lord which was taught to them. This is what constituted their belief; an acceptance of the doctrines of Christ; for by our works are we justified. If the people on the day of Pentecost; and the jailor, had merely believed that the Apostles had spoken the truth, without accepting their doctrines, they would not have received any benefit, as James says,—“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.” James 2. 17.

The fact that Christ went to John and requested to be baptized, should be proof to us that the doctrine of baptism is correct, or Christ would not have taken that step, and after His baptism we read, the Holy Ghost descended upon Him in the form of a dove and the act was sanctioned by our Father in Heaven, for His voice was heard to say,—“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Matthew 3. 17. It became the Savior to be baptized to fulfill all righteousness. As we read in John 3. 5, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.” Christ, by being baptized, set us an example; He went down into the water and He came up again out of the water. We have to be buried with Christ by baptism into death. Baptism is a saving ordinance, being a part of the Gospel, and as Paul says, the Gospel of Christ is “the power of God unto salvation.” When we come forth out of the water we are free from our old sins and we are then fit subjects for the Holy Ghost to dwell in, which dwelleth not in unclean tabernacles.

The same doctrine was taught by Philip to the Eunuch; “And they went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.” Acts 8. 38. John also baptized in Ænon, near to Salim, because there was much water there. John 3. 23. The foregoing passages of scripture very clearly define the manner in which baptism was administered in the days of Christ, also the object for which it was administered. Paul was told by Ananias to arise and be baptized and wash away his sins. Acts 22. 16. Although God had spoken to him, and the Holy Ghost came upon him when Ananias laid his hands upon him and restored his sight, still he was under obligation to attend to this ordinance of baptism in order that his sins might be washed away. As we read that the Lord will not save His people in their sins, but from their sins, we see the necessity of the ordinance of baptism, that being the medium through which our sins are forgiven.

It is therefore a saving ordinance. But alone it is of no avail. We must prepare ourselves for it through faith and repentance, and after we have done so, and obtain a remission of our sins, we then are susceptible of receiving the Holy Ghost, which is the birth of the Spirit, and which is promised to all true believers. This birth of the Spirit is given to the

baptized believer, by the imposition of hands, by those who are appointed to act in the name of the Lord.

This is the manner in which it was imparted in the primitive Christian Church. "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied." Acts 19. 6. "Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." Acts 8. 17. Joshua received it under the hands of Moses; Deut 34. 9. Ananias conferred it upon Paul in the same manner. Acts 9. 17. Timothy received it under the hands of Paul. 2 Timothy 1. 6. Paul also in writing to the Hebrews, speaks of the doctrine of baptism and of laying on of hands, &c. Hebrews 6. 2. It is important that all should understand that the ordinance of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost are only for those who are capable of believing and repenting; and who practice these principles; and not for infants, because faith and repentance must precede baptism, and little children are incapable of exercising faith in the Lord or repenting of sins. It should also be well understood, that unless these ordinances are administered to us by those who are authorized to act in the name of the Lord, we shall not receive any benefit.

Authority to administer in the ordinances of the Gospel is absolutely essential. "And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God as was Aaron." Hebrews 5. 4. Aaron's calling came by revelation direct. God instructed Moses to call him to the ministry. Exodus 4. 14—17. Men take it upon themselves to go and preach, thereby usurping—or endeavoring to do so—the authority which Christ gave to His apostles. Authority given to men in former days does not apply to us, but only to those to whom it was given. If we receive authority, we must do so in the proper manner, which is by revelation. The Apostles of Christ were ordained under His hands, and He received His commission from His Father, and so it is handed down through the channel of the Priesthood. We cannot expect the Lord to acknowledge our services unless we have been commissioned to act in His name. Jesus said to His disciples,—“As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” John 20. 21.

The doctrine of revelation is repudiated by the Christian world, which is sufficient to show us that they are not called of God as was Aaron, because that is the way in which he was called. If there is no voice from heaven to guide us, how are we to know what the Lord requires of us. The Church of God in former days was led by revelation, and why not now? There is no reason. The Gospel is the same now, as then, and is taught in the same manner, and by the same authority. It cannot exist upon the earth and be taught among the people under any other conditions.

As a humble servant of God, I testify to all to whom these words may come, that the Gospel of Christ is being taught in its purity by the Elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and that the same organization exists now, as in the days of Christ, and that gifts and blessings and signs do follow believers. I have seen them manifested among the saints, therefore know of a surety that they do exist. "If any man will do His will he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." John 7. 17.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY DANIEL H. WELLS,

*At the Latter-day Saints' Printing, Publishing, and Emigration Office,
42, Islington, Liverpool.*